

Message Text

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PAGE 01 WELLIN 04481 022146Z

11
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 AGR-05 /059 W
----- 094141

R 020416Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2395
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
USDEL MTN GENEVA
USMISSION OECD PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL AUCKLAND

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE WELLINGTON 4481

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ETRD, EGEN, EAGR, ELAB, NZ
SUBJ: SETTLEMENT IN FREEZING WORKERS DISPUTE

REF: WELLINGTON 4353

SUMMARY: NEW ZEALAND FREEZING WORKS RETURNED TO NORMAL OPERATIONS NOV 29 AND 30 AS EMPLOYERS ENDED THEIR LOCKOUT AND FREEZING/MEAT WORKERS UNIONS AGREED TO LIFT THEIR BAN ON MEAT EXPORTS. SUBSEQUENT NEGOTIATIONS DEC 1 RESULTED IN AGREEMENT ON NEW AWARD FOR WORKERS, INCLUDING FOUR PERCENT WAGE INCREASE. ISSUE OF WORKERS' TRAVEL ALLOWANCE, WHICH WAS AT HUB OF PREVIOUS NEGOTIATIONS BREAKDOWN, REFERRED TO COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY FOR DECISION. RAPID AWARD SETTLEMENT FOLLOWING RETURN TO WORK PROBABLY THE PRODUCT OF SERIOUS RIFT IN RANKS OF FREEZING/MEAT WORKERS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SLAUGHTER OF NEW ZEALAND LAMB AND BEEF BEGAN TO RETURN TO NORMAL NOV 29 AND 30 AS FREEZING AND MEAT WORKERS AROUND THE COUNTRY LIFTED THEIR BAN ON MEAT EXPORTS AND FREEZING COMPANIES ENDED THEIR LOCKOUTS. RESUMPTION
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PAGE 02 WELLIN 04481 022146Z

OF WORK WAS RESULT OF COMPULSORY CONFERENCE AND BINDING

DECISION BY GOVT CONCILIATOR THAT KILLING MUST
RESUME WHILE NEGOTIATIONS PROCEEDED.

2. AWARD NEGOTIATIONS HAD BEEN GOING ON BETWEEN FREEZING
WORKERS AND COMPANIES FOR SEVERAL MONTHS BUT GROUND TO
HALT NOV 9. THUS, AGREEMENT DEC 1, AFTER JUST EIGHT HOURS
OF RESUMED DISCUSSIONS, CAME AS SOMETHING OF A SURPRISE.
AWARD CALLS FOR FOUR PERCENT WAGE INCREASE (SUBJECT TO
INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION APPROVAL) AND IMPROVEMENTS IN
HOLIDAY, SICK LEAVE, SENIORITY AND OTHER FRINGE BENEFITS.
AGREEMENT WAS NOT REACHED, HOWEVER, IN THE MOST CONTENTIOUS
ISSUE IN THE DISPUTE, THE \$1.50 PER DAY TRAVEL ALLOWANCE
CLAIM. MATTER HAS BEEN REFERRED TO COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY
SET UP BY MINISTER OF LABOR FOR A DECISION.

3. COMMENT: THE RAPIDITY WITH WHICH AGREEMENT WAS
REACHED AND THE FACT THAT CENTRAL ISSUE OF TRAVEL ALLOW-
ANCE WAS SHUNTED ASIDE IN THE SETTLEMENT REFLECT THE
DEEP SPLIT WHICH APPEARED IN RANK AND FILE AND LEADER-
SHIP OF FREEZING WORKERS AND MEAT WORKERS TOWARD END OF
NEGOTIATIONS. ALTHOUGH UNION LEADERS CLAIMED SATISFACTION
WITH AWARD, THE FACTS ARE THAT SETTLEMENT FOUND:

A. AUCKLAND FREEZING WORKERS CHARGING SELL-OUT BY
THEIR NATIONAL UNION,

B. FREEZING WORKERS LEADERSHIP AND MEAT WORKERS
LEADERSHIP ENGAGED IN PERSONALITY SQUABBLE, AND

C. THE PRECEDENT SETTING DAILY TRAVEL ALLOWANCE,
IN WHICH THE UNIONS AND FEDERATION OF LABOUR HAD
INVESTED CONSIDERABLE EFFORT, REFERRED TO A STUDY COMMITTEE
WHOSE FINDINGS ARE CERTAIN TO BE UNFAVORABLE. UNION
LEADERSHIP WILL BE HARD PRESSED TO PUT POSITIVE IMAGE ON
THE OUTCOME.
SELDEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISPUTES, EXPORTS, MEATS, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976WELLIN04481
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760447-0994
From: WELLINGTON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761277/aaaacoov.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 WELLINGTON 4353
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <16 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SETTLEMENT IN FREEZING WORKERS DISPUTE
TAGS: ETRD, EGEN, EAGR, ELAB, NZ
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006